Happyland: a history of the “dirty thirties” in Saskatchewan, 1914-1937

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HAPPYLAND:
A HISTORY OF THE “DIRTY THIRTIES”
IN SASKATCHEWAN, 1914–1937
by Curtis R. McManus
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Notes

INTRODUCTION

3. Ibid., 4 November 1922.
6. Village Records, 23 October 1924. Hatton was settled in large measure by Russians and German-speaking Russians. According to writer Timothy Egan, “they liked to sing and kept the floors of their houses clean enough to dine on.” In fact, Egan observes of these immigrants, “Dust inside the house was something they would not tolerate.” See Timothy Egan, *The Worst Hard Time* (New York: Mariner Books, 2006), p. 60.
8. Ibid., 21 April 1925.
10. Village Records, 10 June 1922. Outside Regina city hall, there is a memorial to those pioneers who settled the early west, including Chinese people. The memorial provides a fascinating glimpse into the reasons why some Chinese fled their home country and the freedom they found in Canada. The memorial retells the story of a Chinese man who cut off his queue, or top-knot, a traditional sign of obedience to China’s foreign Manchurian rulers. The man’s friend was aghast and said, “they [court officials] will come and slice off your head.” But the man replied, “let them come and find me.”
11. *Prairie Echoes*, pp. 4–7. The figure of 800 people is an estimate provided by former resident Mrs. Laura Phaff and likely represents the population of not only the town but also the immediate surrounding area. Estimates from the Department of Municipal Affairs place the town’s population at somewhere around 200 people.


14 Village Records, 8 January 1929.

15 Ibid., October 1932.

16 Ibid., January 1932.

17 Ibid., 1 June 1933.


26 Ibid., 10.


28 Ibid., 224.

29 Ibid., 225.


31 Ibid., 207.

32 Thomas et al., *The Prairie West to 1905*, 226.


34 Thanks to University of Saskatchewan history professor Dr. Brett Fairbairn for making this suggestion.

35 Breen, *The Canadian Prairie West*, p. 58. Breen adds that this allegiance “remained an enduring characteristic of the region’s political structure until well after the turn of the century.” One could add that it is still very true today.

36 Thomas et al., *The Prairie West to 1905*, 226.


39 Ibid., 245.

40 Ibid., 245, 249.

41 Ibid., 245.


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1: THE DESCENT


2 David C. Jones, *Empire of Dust: Settling and Abandoning the Prairie*
23 Debates, 14 March 1907, 4690, see also Martin, 'Dominion Lands', 162–64.
24 Ibid., 23 June 1908, 11142.
25 Martin, 'Dominion Lands', 162–64. The Kincaid Act would be followed by other legislation after 1910 that encouraged the development of stock-raising homesteads, in effect, turning much Nebraska land back to a cattle preserve.
27 Ibid., 135.
31 Saskatchewan Archives Board (hereafter SAB), GR-44, R-5–2, Papers of F.H. Auld, A.F. Mantle, “Progress in Western Agriculture,” 1911.
37 Debates, 14 March 1907, p. 4699.
38 Ibid., p. 4715.
39 Ibid., p. 4727.
40 Ibid., 23 June 1908, p. 11145.
42 Ibid., p. 78.
43 Ibid.
44 E.W. Stapleford, “Report on Rural Relief Due to Drought Conditions and Crop Failures in Western Canada,” Canada, Department of Agriculture, 1938, p. 31.
47 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1908, p. 93.
49 Ibid., p. 4.
51 Ibid., p. 295.
52 Canada, Sessional Papers, 25, vol. XLIV, no. 16, 1911, xx.
53 Ibid., xx. Delaware was the first state admitted to the Union. Its motto is “Liberty and Independence”; the state motto for Alabama is the historically pungent “We Dare Defend Our Rights.” Saskatchewan has “Land of Living Skies.”
Canada, Sessional Papers, 25, vol. XLV, no. 16, 1911, xxix.

Ibid., 25, vol. XCLVII, no. 18, 1913, xx.

Ibid., xxii.

Ibid., 25, part 1, vol. XLVIII, no 19, 1914, xxiv; see also 25, part 1, no. 19, 1915, xxiv.


Canada, Sessional Papers, 25, part 1, vol. XLVIII, no. 19, 1914, xi. We shall return to this idea of “Progress” at a later stage in the book.

Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1907, p. 116.

Ibid., 1908, 76.

Ibid., 1909, 78.


Fred Wilkes, They Rose from the Dust (Saskatoon: Modern Press, 1958), p. 97.

This story was communicated to the author during a telephone conversation, 5 March 2010.

Communicated to the author during an interview with Mr. Ralph Mutter, Wednesday, September 1, 2010.


Ibid., p. 225.


Ibid., p. 258.

Coronach, p. 296.

Richmound, p. 305.

Coronach, p. 296.

Aneroid, p. 92.

Wilkes, They Rose from the Dust, p. 97.


Ibid., p. 12.

Richmound, p. 270.

Coronach, p. 258.

Richmound, pp. 257, 272.

Interview with Mr. Ralph Mutter, September 1, 2010.

Aneroid, p. 196.


Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1909, p. 75.

Ibid., p. 73.

Alberta, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1909, p. 45.

Ibid., p. 69.

Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1909, p. 94.

“Mossback” and “Sodbuster” were (and perhaps still are) pejorative terms applied to the settler by cattle ranchers.

Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1909, p. 91.


Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1910, 68.

Ibid., 68.

Alberta, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1910, 42.

Ibid., 42.

Ibid. See also Bicha The American Farmer, 96. Bicha notes that during the eighteen-year period of his study, 1910 was the year when the American exodus out of the dry lands was highest. Of course this does not
take into account the number of Americans who fled after 1917.

Alberta, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1910, 229–30. It is of more than passing interest to note that Saskatchewan did not maintain a publicity commissioner similar to Alberta. Interesting because it is one more way that the differences between the two provinces is revealed in addition to how each government would handle the same circumstances during the coming droughts of the 1920s.


Ibid., 23–25.

Canada, *Sessional Papers*, vol. XLVII, no. 18, 1913, p. 32.

The percentage figures are based on the number of homestead applications being filed versus the number of cancellations being filed in each year.


Ibid., pp. 44–46.

Ibid., p. 45.

Ibid., p. 31.

Canada, *Sessional Papers*, vol. XLVI, no. 17, 1912, 18; Canada, *Sessional Papers*, vol. XLVII, no. 18, 1913, 16.

Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Reports*, 1914, 106.

Ibid., p. 113. This average was calculated using the yield returns of all crop districts except districts three and six.

Ibid., p. 113.

Ibid., p. 111.

Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1914, pp. 106, 108. Auld was soon to replace Mr. Mantle as deputy. Mr. Mantle signed on as Major in the 68th Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. He would die in the war.


*Harvest of Memories: RM 134 and Shamrock* (Regina: Focus Publishing, 1990), p. 337. The Bassendowski’s trek from the Old World was, like many other pioneers, a long and interesting one which, one must reluctantly admit, seemed to have a descending arc: Germany–New York–Montreal–Winnipeg–Regina–Moose Jaw–Herbert–Shamrock.

*History of Golden Prairie*, p. 83.


“Additional Relief Work to be Done by Government,” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 2 October 1914, p. 1.


Ibid., 4 August 1914, p. 1.


Ibid., p. 2.

Interview with Mr. Ralph Mutter, September 1, 2010. There is a prodigious amount of natural gas exploration in the Hatton area these days. Thanks to Mr. Kelly Mutter for suggesting that nearby Bitter Lake may in fact have been so named because of the amount of gas in the water-table.

*Aneroid*, p. 205.


Ibid., p. 111.
2: “IN THE THRILL ZONE OF THE ONRUSHING CALAMITY”

1 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1916, 10. Auld replaced A.F. Mantle, who perished while fighting in the Great War. Major Mantle fought with the 68th Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

2 Ibid., 120.

3 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Reports*, 1918, 111; 1919, 104.


6 Alberta, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1918, 128. While Saskatchewan established a royal
commission in 1920, the Alberta government established aid offices at Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and Youngstown to provide settlers with the “necessities of life.” See Alberta, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1919, p. 10.


10 Ibid., p. 1.


13 Ibid., 5.


16 Saskatchewan Archives Board, "Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Farming Conditions, 1920," pp. 10–11. This statement by Mr. Spence was not true. Summer-fallow was not “forced” on anyone. Soil exhaustion had been long known as one of the disadvantages to summer-fallow. Mr. Motherwell and Mr. MacKay both knew of it at least as far back as 1910, likely much earlier.

17 Ibid., 10–11. That the province also had to be forcibly frog-marched into financing some form of experimental research is suggested when the dithering Premier Dunning explained to the Legislative Assembly in 1919 that “it does not appear that the provincial government should undertake the establishment of experimental farms in competition with the federal government.” See Journals and Sessional Papers, Legislative Assembly of the Province of Saskatchewan, Session 1919–1920 (Regina: J. W. Reid, 1920), 18 December 1919, p. 55.

18 Report of the Royal Commission, p. 16. Spence was borne in Scotland, one of many Scots who contributed to the formation and development of not only Canada but also Saskatchewan. He held many senior Ministerial positions in the provincial government before ultimately finishing his career as first director of the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation administration. He is a member of the Saskatchewan Agricultural Hall of Fame.

19 Ibid., p. 44.

20 Ibid., p. 11.


22 John Bracken, *Dryland Farming in Western Canada* (Winnipeg: Grain Growers Publications, 1921), 2. Bracken would later become the premier of Manitoba.

23 Ibid., p. 174.

24 Ibid., 301.

25 SAB, R-261, F23-1-1, Keelor to Department of Agriculture, 23 May, 1921.

26 Ibid.


28 SAB, R-261, f23-1-1, Keelor to Auld, 22 July 1921.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid., Auld to Keelor, 27 May 1921.

31 Ibid.
We refer to the Department of Agriculture’s Annual Report, 1922, “Report of Mr. James Murray,” p. 18.

SAB, R-261, f 22.15, “Drought-General.”

“Agricultural Trains Not To Run This Year,” Regina Morning Leader, 17 May 1923, p. 3.

Saskatchewan, Journals and Sessional Papers, Legislative Assembly of the Province of Saskatchewan, Session 1919–1920 (Regina: J.W. Reid, 1920), 18 December, 1919, p. 55.

Saskatchewan, Journals, 1921–1922 (Regina: J.W. Reid, 1922), 24 January 1922, p. 69.

“Agricultural Trains Not To Run This Year,” p. 3.

RM of Big Stick Archives, (Golden Prairie), “Minutes of RM Meetings, 1920–1984,” 5 August 1922. This particular problem would be solved in part by the now-ubiquitous three-strand barbed wire fence found throughout the south plains of rural Saskatchewan.


Ibid., 4 February 1922.

Ibid.

SAB, R-261, F23-1-1, Keelor to Premier Martin, 27 July 1921.

David C. Jones, Empire of Dust: Settling and Abandoning the Prairie Drybelt (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1987), 130.

SAB-R, R-261, F23-1-1, Martin to Auld, April 1921.


Ibid., 211.
introduce a kind of parliament to Russia for the first time in 1905. The revolution of 1917 would be more thorough-going and far-reaching. The quote on the Bolsheviks can be found in J.F.C. Wright, *Saskatchewan: The History of a Province* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1955), p. 212. Wright also offers the not-entirely-un-truthful observation that “some militant leaders in the Saskatchewan agrarian movement mouth[ed] Marxist phrases fed them by dedicated members of the Communist Party of Canada, most of whom would see Bolshevik Russia only in books and illustrated propaganda pamphlets.”

68 *SAB*, Ag. 2-7, “Application for Free Shipment of Settler’s Stock and Effects from Points in Dry Area.”


70 Ibid., pp. 457–60.

71 Ibid., p. 461.

72 Ibid., p. 465.

73 Ibid., p. 457.

74 Ibid., pp. 458, 463. That the Konschuhs prospered in Cluny is indicated by the fact that there are fully fifteen branches of the Konschuhs in the Cluny history book.

75 *SAB*, R-261, F23-1-1, Schmidt to the Provincial Government, 16 July 1921.


77 Ibid., p. 869.

78 *SAB*, R-261, F-23-1-1, Auld to Thomas Lannan, 22 July 1921.

79 Ibid.


82 *SAB*, M-13 14 f1, Huelskamp to Dunning, 8 July 1922.

83 Ibid., pp. 2–4.

84 Ibid., Dunning to Huelskamp, 14 July 1922.

85 Ibid.

86 Ibid., Memo to Premier Dunning, 28 August 1922.

87 Ibid., pp. 2–4.

88 Ibid., p. 3.

89 Ibid., p. 3. The comment that it was a federal responsibility was not isolated to Smith but was apparently government policy. MLA George Spence (former head of the Royal Commission) asked Agriculture Minister Charles Hamilton in late 1921, a year and a half after the completion of the Better Farming Conference, what Hamilton’s government was doing to implement the recommendations of the BFC. In what would become a typical reply, Hamilton explained that most of the recommendations of the commission were a federal responsibility, such as grazing lands, second homesteads, and the withdrawal of certain lands from settlement, etc. This technically correct though very narrow and limited reasoning Excused the province from almost anything. Hamilton did not mention anything about evacuating settlers, also a recommendation of the commission. See Journals, First Session of the Fifth Legislative Assembly of the Province of Saskatchewan, Session 1921–1922 (Regina: J.W. Reid, 1922), 15 December 1921, p. 24.

90 Masonville was a postal sub-division that served a dozen families in the Alsask district. Anton had named it in honour of his wife’s maiden name: Mason.

92 Ibid., Auld to Dunning, 28 April 1923, p. 2123.
94 SAB, M-6, Y-O-4, Huelskamp to Dunning, 13 May 1923, p. 2125.
95 SAB, M-13, 14, f1, Internal Memo, Department of Agriculture, 10 November 1922.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid.
99 SAB, Ag., 2-7, G.H. Smith to Auld, 6 January 1923.
100 Ibid., Auld to A.E. Hatley, 9 January 1923.
101 Ibid., Smith to Auld, 13 January 1923.
102 Ibid., Hatley to Auld, 23 January 1923.
105 Ibid., p. 214.
106 SAB, M-13, 14, f1, Cory to Dunning, 26 January 1923.
107 Ibid., Internal Memo, Auld to Dunning, 31 January 1923.
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
110 Ibid., Hamilton to Cory, 29 January 1923.
111 Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-261, f 22.15, “Drought-General,” Black to Auld, 13 December 1921.
114 SAB, M-13, 14, Stewart to Dunning, 29 April 1924.
115 Ibid.
116 SAB, M-13, 14, Stewart to Dunning, 29 April 1924.
117 Ibid., 2.
118 Ibid., Auld to Stewart, 31 May 1924.
121 Jones, *Empire of Dust*, p. 117.
122 Ibid., p. 117.
123 Department of Agriculture, Annual Reports, 1925, p. 12.
125 Ibid., 13.
126 SAB, R-261, F23-1-1, Stonehouse to Auld, 27 March 1922.
127 Jones, *Empire of Dust*, p. 204.
130 Ibid., p. 153.
132 Ibid., 4.
134 Ibid.
136 Ibid., 8.
137 Jones *Empire of Dust*, p. 121.
138 Saskatchewan, Department of Municipal Affairs, *Annual Report*, 1921, p. 5.
140 Ibid.
supplied in 1920 was $356,215.00, a decrease from the $2.2 million spent in 1919. See ibid.

“Pay your Taxes,” Kindersley Clarion, 5 October 1922, p. 3.

Ibid., 3.

Ibid., 3.

Jones, Empire of Dust, p. 155.

Ibid., p. 155.

White Valley Minutes #1, 7 August 1920, 233.


Ibid., 4 February 1921.

Saskatchewan, Department of Municipal Affairs, Annual Report, 1921, p. 6.

RM of Big Stick Archives (Golden Prairie, Saskatchewan) “Minutes of RM Meetings, 1920–1923” (hereafter Big Stick Minutes), 4 February 1922.

Ibid., 6 May 1922.

Big Stick Minutes, 5 August 1922.

Ibid.

Ibid., 3 February 1923.

Ibid., 8 July 1922.

Ibid., 5 July 1922.

White Valley Minutes #1, p. 288.

RM of Maple Creek Archives (Maple Creek, Saskatchewan) “Minutes of the RM Meetings” (hereafter Maple Creek Minutes), 7 February 1925.

Ibid., 31 July 1922.

Rural Municipal Government in Alberta, p. 82.

Clinworth Minutes, 5 February 1921.

Jones, Empire of Dust, p. 157.

Ibid., p. 157.

Clinworth Minutes, 16 September 1924. Councillor Ducie’s brothers were Barnardo Boys; see The Past to the Present, “Ducie, William.”

Ibid.

Big Stick Minutes, 23 March 1923.

Ibid., 3 October 1925.
187  Ibid., 5 January 1924.
189  Clinworth Minutes, 4 February 1922.
190  Ibid., 1 April 1922.
192  Ibid., p. 1.
193  Clinworth Minutes, November 1920.
195  Reno Minutes, Letter – Insert to Minutes, 23 February 1922.
196  Ibid.
197  Jones, Empire of Dust, p. 183.
198  Reno Minutes, Letter – Insert to Minutes, 23 February 1923
199  Ibid.
200  SAB, MA, 11(a), Disorganized Records of the Village of Hatton, 1922–1934, February, also October 1924.
201  Jones, Empire of Dust, p. 185.
202  Big Stick Minutes, 2 April 1921.
203  Big Stick Minutes, 2 February 1926.
204  Maple Creek Minutes, 25 November 1922.
205  Ibid., 27 March 1922.
206  Ibid.
207  Clinworth Minutes, 2 August 1924.
208  Jones, Empire of Dust, p. 188.
209  Clinworth, 3 January 1922.
210  Ibid., 24 April 1924.
211  Reno Minutes, 3 December 1921.
213  Jones, Empire of Dust, p. 197.
214  Ibid., p. 197.
215  Ibid., p. 196.
216  Big Stick Minutes, 4 March 1922.
217  Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-261, f 22.15 “Drought-General,” memo to Premier Martin, 12 April 1921.
218  Big Stick Minutes, 4 March 1922. See also Clinworth Minutes, 5 November 1921.
219  Ibid., 4 March 1922.
220  Ibid.
221  Reno Minutes, Insert, 22 July 1921.
222  Ibid., 3 December 1921.
223  White Valley Minutes #2, 286.
224  Ibid., 286.
225  Rural Municipal Government in Alberta, p. 52.
226  Ibid.
227  Clinworth Minutes, December 1921.
228  Big Stick Minutes, 2 July 1921.
229  SAB, R-261, F23-1-1, Auld to G.R. Murdoch, 14 November 1921.
230  RM of Reno Archives, “Tax Sale and Redemption Record, 1921–1925,” (missing front cover and bearing no identifying marks) the 419 figure derives from a calculation of the total tax sale entries in this log.
231  SAB, MA-3, Records of the Department of Municipal Affairs, “Seed Feed and Relief: 1921–1924,” J.J. Smith to E. Erikson, 12 October 1921. The government assumed responsibility for debt collection only after the RM had failed in that regard. In other words, the loans were guaranteed.
232  Ibid., Erickson to Smith, 17 October 1921.
233  Ibid.
234  Ibid.
235  Ibid., MacDonald to Smith, 29 October 1922.
Historian Barry Potyondi notes that the Maple Creek district experienced a 62 per cent homestead failure rate, with 32 per cent abandoning their farms between 1920 and 1930. In Palliser’s Triangle: Living in the Grasslands, 1850–1930 (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 1995), 93. The tax-sale records for the RM of Maple Creek were unavailable.

See, for example, White Valley Minutes #1, 5 June 1920, 230–32.

Big Stick Minutes, 2 October 1926; 2 April 1927.


Ibid.; see “Purchaser” columns.

Saskatchewan, Department of Municipal Affairs, Annual Reports, 1920, pp. 26–37; 1926, pp. 26–33.

Clinworth Minutes, 1 November 1926.

Prairie Echoes of Hatton: A Story of Hatton Saskatchewan and Surrounding Area (n.p., 1983), p. 3. This is one of the very few references made to the land abandonment crisis of the 1920s in local community history books. Often, what seems to happen is that people assumed that the land abandonment problem in their RM affected only their RM.

There have never been any wider connections made.

Clinworth Minutes, 16 September 1924.

Ibid.


Ibid., pp. 1, 4.

Ibid., p. 10.

Ibid., p. 10.


Ibid., 1.


Interlude: A Collection of Absurdities


2 Saskatchewan Archives Board, Department of Agriculture, Field crops branch, Ag.3, f112, Relief, 1929–1936.


4 “Suicide of [__________],” Swift Current Sun, 7 July 1914, p. 1.

5 “Prominent Glidden Farmer Commits Suicide on Dominion Day,” Kindersley Clarion, 8 July 1937.

6 “A Cure for Drunkeness” advertisement, Maple Creek News 17 May 1914, p. 5.

7 Pinto Creek Minutes, 22 June 1937.
3: Hard times


7. Saskatchewan Archives Board, Agricultural Statistics Branch, R-266, I-Relief Files, 1 Relief Statistics for Rural Municipalities and Local Improvement Districts, 1919–1946, file-a, see file for RM #75.

8. Ibid.; see file for RM #231.


10. SAB, R-266, I-1. See file for RM #273 and RM #183.


15. Barry Broadfoot, *Ten Lost Years: Memories of Canadians Who Survived*


18 Ibid., p. 154.

19 Ibid., p. 116.

20 Fred Wilkes, They Rose from the Dust (Saskatoon: Modern Press, 1958), p. 179.

21 Broadfoot, Ten Lost Years, p. 41.


23 Ibid., p. 319.

24 Ibid., p. 319. Central Canadian farmers did not, as a general rule, use summer-fallow.

25 Archer, Saskatchewan, p. 215.

26 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, Annual Reports, year ending April 1929, p. 9.


31 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1931, p. 9.

32 Ibid., p. 9.

33 Ibid., 1932, p. 8.

34 Archer, Saskatchewan, p. 220.

35 Waiser, Saskatchewan, p. 293.

36 Report of the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations – Saskatchewan (Ottawa: 1937), hereafter called the Rowell-Sirois Report, p. 291. As the Commissioners point out, the SRC likely thought that fruits and vegetables would be supplied through other relief agencies and so they felt no need to supply duplicate services. As it was, if you were on SRC relief, this is what you would receive: potatoes, beef, pork, fish, butter sugar, rolled oats, salt, tea, coffee, jam or honey, beans, pot barley, corn meal, yeast, baking powder, pepper, soap, coal oil, matches, “epsom salts and saltpetre.” See ibid. p. 291.

37 Ibid., p. 291.

38 Ibid.

39 Saskatchewan, Department of Public Health, Annual Reports, 1938, pp. 218–19.


41 Saskatchewan Archives Board, Agricultural Statistics Branch, R-266, “Reestablishment Assistance,” f10, 3 and 4, “Tables of Relief Services Advances.”


43 Ibid., p. 42.


46 Deer Forks, Minutes of RM Meetings, 2 July 1930.

47 Ibid., February, 1933.

48 Archer, Saskatchewan, p. 221.

49 Deer Forks Minutes, February, 1933.

50 Burstall, Treasured Memories: A History of Burstall and District, (Burstall: Burstall History Book Committee, 1983), pp. 13–17. Messr’s Alex and Peter Lomow, brothers of Leon, wrote this fascinating tale for the Burstall Community History book. The exceptional prose of the story is remarkable because English was their second language. The Burstall-Hatton-Leader district
attracted a huge influx of not only Russian settlers, but German-speaking Russians who had settled in Russia during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

51 Deer Forks Minutes, 2 April 1933.
52 SAB, Ag. 3, f112, “Revised Maximum Credits for Petrol Products,” 1935.
53 Deer Forks Minutes, 5 August 1937. Permission was required in those days to cut wood in certain areas.
54 Mankota, Minutes of RM Meetings (hereafter Mankota Minutes), 7 October 1933. According to Mr. Mike Sherven, the administrator for the RM of Mankota, the coal mines (there were three of them) were abandoned and shut down in the 1940s. Few traces remain and to gain access one must traverse a rigorously bumpy section of trail that runs through a PFRA pasture.
55 Gray, Men against the Desert, p. 60.
58 Ibid., p. 22.
59 Pinto Creek, Minutes of RM Meetings, 5 September 1931.
60 Mankota Minutes, 2 December 1933.
61 Advertisement, Kindersley Clarion, 30 September 1937, p. 4.
63 Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, “Moral Standards Collapse Under Depression Strain,” 7 July 1937, p. 5.
64 Pinto Creek, Minutes, 5 October 1929.
66 Rowell-Sirois, p. 292. Under the SRC, settlers were allowed a maximum of $9.00 a year for clothes for an adult, $6.25 for a boy, $5.25 for a girl. By 1937, the annual allotment had increased to $14.00 to a maximum of $140.00 for a “family of 20.”
69 Aneroid: The Rising Barometer, p. 127.
71 Ibid., p. 243.
72 Hutchinson, The Unknown Country, p. 293.
73 Ibid., pp. 293–94.
74 Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, “Moral Standards Collapse Under Depression Strain,” 7 July 1937, p. 5.
75 Stapleford, “Report on Relief,” p. 87.
76 Saskatchewan, Department of Public Health, Annual Report, 1921, p. 76.
77 Ibid., 1924, p. 96.
78 Ibid., 1929, p. 81; 1932, p. 92; 1934, p. 96.
79 Ibid., 1938, p. 114.
80 Ibid., 1929, p. 81. See also ibid., p. 76. Of the 680 illegitimate children born in 1932, 353 were born in the rural areas. See ibid., 1932, p. 93.
81 Ibid., 1929, p. 81. In examining the ages at which young women got married in the 1930s, it was found that there was a continual back-and-forth between two demographic groups with the highest instances of marriage. For women, it vacillated between young girls in the 15 to 19 age group, and young women in the 20- to 24-year-old age group. For men, alas, there was only consistency: the
24-year-old age group was always and consistently the demographic from amongst which the highest number of men were married each year.

82 In 1932, there were seven illegitimate children born to girls under fifteen and young German girls mothered three, the highest number of any one single ethnic group. There were 233 illegitimate children born to young girls between the ages of 15 and 19 and again the Germans had the most at forty-two; there were 259 illegitimate children born to young women in the 20–24 age group, with the Germans again producing the most at fifty-four. See ibid., 1932, p. 93.

83 Ibid., 1921, p. 87.
84 Ibid., 1929 p. 98.
85 Ibid., 1932, p. 115; 1938, p. 133.
86 Ibid., 1924, p. 80; 1938, p. 133.
89 Saskatchewan Archives Board, Department of Agriculture, R-261, Drought-General, f22.15, W.H. March to F.H. Auld, 2 May, 1932.
90 Swift Current, Minutes of RM Meetings, 2 September 1933.
91 SAB, MA, f5, Special File, Memo, Department of Municipal Affairs.
92 Pinto Creek Minutes, 18 February 1933.
93 Coronach, p. 244.
94 Harvest of Memories, p. 455.
95 Ibid., p. 455.
96 Ibid., p. 55.
98 Ibid. See also ibid., 1936, p. 196.
99 SAB, R-261, f22-15, Deputy Minister Innes to Deputy Minister Auld, 28 July 1931.

101 Saskatchewan, Department of Public Health, *Annual Report*, 1938, pp. 220–21. In 1929, eighty-five males killed themselves, as compared to ten females. Amongst the victims, there were eight boys and one girl under fifteen; twenty-four single men between the ages of 25 and 44; twenty-four married men and three married women between the ages of 45 and 64. The most common form of self-execution for men was death by firearms (29) and for women, the majority (3) preferred self-strangulation.

102 Rowell-Sirois Commission, p. 291.
103 *Harvest of Memories*, p. 435.
104 *Richmond’s Heritage: A History of Richmond and District* (Richmond: Richmond Historical Society, 1978), p. 271. The three exclamation points are in the original.
105 Ibid., p. 166.
106 Coronach, p. 243.
107 Ibid., p. 243.
109 *Harvest of Memories*, p. 512.
110 Aneroid, p. 144.
111 Coronach, p. 112.
112 Ibid., p. 112–13.
115 Coronach, p. 197.
116 Aneroid, p. 165.
117 Ibid., p. 190.
118 Swift Current Minutes, 16 March 1935.
120 Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, “Few People Moving Out of the Southern Drylands,” 19 September 1934, p. 3.
121 Neatby, “The Relief Commission,” p. 56.
122 Harvest of Memories, p. 55.
123 Ibid., p. 55.
124 Neatby, “The Relief Commission” p. 56.
125 Mankota, Minutes of RM Meeting.
126 Swift Current Minutes, 2 May 1936.
127 Harvest of Memories, p. 55.
128 Ibid., pp. 55, 57.
129 Ibid., p. 56.
130 Big Stick, Minutes of RM Meetings, 3 July 1936.
131 Ibid., 10 October 1934.
132 SAB R-266, I-1 a, “Relief Files,” see #141.
133 SAB R-266, I-1 “Relief Files a,” see RM #230.
134 Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-266, III Subject Files, 14, Drought Committee, 1946, “Relief Services Advances.”
135 Ibid., “Rural Population, Total Relief Feed and Fodder, 1929/30-1938/39.”
136 SAB R-266, #10, 3/4 “Synopsis of Expenditures of Agricultural Relief, 1907–1941.”
138 Ibid., p. 83; see also Gray, Men against the Desert, p. 133.
139 Archer, Saskatchewan, pp. 214–15.
140 Gray, Men against the Desert, p. 4.
141 Archer, Saskatchewan, 227; Waiser, Saskatchewan, p. 296.
142 Big Stick Minutes, Monday, 5 January (or October?), 1931.

144 Ibid., p. 50.
145 Clinworth, Minutes of RM Meetings, 4 January 1934.
146 Clinworth, 3 September 1935.
147 Ibid., 7 October 1929.
148 Ibid., 7 August 1933.
149 Ibid., 12 August 1935.
150 Deer Forks Minutes, 5 January 1931.
151 Ibid., 6 July, 1932.
152 Ibid., 3 December 1930.
154 Deer Forks Minutes, 5 October 1932.
156 Ibid.
157 Pinto Creek Minutes, 6 August 1932.
158 Swift Current Minutes, 15 July 1932, 7 September 1935.
159 Deer Forks Minutes, 7 September 1938.
160 Archer, Saskatchewan, p. 237.
161 Archer, Saskatchewan, p. 237.
162 SAB MA, f5, Special File, “Grants, Loans and Estimated Expenditures of School Districts.”
163 Swift Current Minutes, 5 April 1930, 5 March 1932; Pinto Creek 16 March, 1929, 14 March 1931.
164 Big Stick Minutes, 6 December 1930.
165 Clinworth Minutes, 3 August 1936.
167 Rowell-Sirois, p. 278.
168 Aneroid, p. 376. The Rowell-Sirois Commission determined that “it has become impossible for pupils
in rural districts either to drive to nearby town schools … or to board in town in order to secure a high school education." See Rowell-Sirois, p. 279. So, Mrs. Schmidt’s observation that she was teaching sixteen-year-olds in grade six was likely helped along by the fact that there was simply nowhere else for these kids to go.

170 Richmound, p. 352.
171 Ibid., p. 352.
172 Ibid., p. 165.
173 Clinworth Minutes, 5 July 1937.
174 Pinto Creek Minutes, 7 October 1933.
175 Clinworth Minutes, 5 April 1933.
176 Swift Current Minutes, 26 March 1932.
177 Mankota Minutes, 1 June 1935.
179 Ibid., p. 87.
180 Big Stick Minutes, 5 December 1931.
181 Ibid., 15 July 1935.
182 Clinworth Minutes, 3 October 1932.
183 Swift Current Minutes, 5 September 1931.
184 Pinto Creek Minutes, 4 June 1932, 2 July 1932.
185 Big Stick Minutes, 5 February 1937. These parcels of land were likely a part of the effort in the 1930s to classify lands as suitable/unsuitable and signed over to the Land Utilization Board, which would then turn the blocks of land into community pasture.
187 Big Stick Minutes, 4 November 1935.
190 Ibid., p. 133.
191 Ibid., pp. 133–36.
192 Saskatchewan Archives Board, Department of Municipal Affairs, "Radio Address Given by Mr. Matte on the Work of the NSRB, January 31 and February 14 1939,” MA.3, f-8, p. 5.
193 Deer Forks Minutes, 6 May 1914.
194 SAB, R-266, #10, 3/4, "Copy of a General Letter to Rural Municipalities Advising of the Organization of Relief Camps,” 30 August 1930. A “straw boss” is an overseer selected from amongst the men.
196 Ibid., p. 8.
197 Richmound, p. 243.
199 Swift Current Minutes, 2 November 1929.
200 Mankota Minutes, 5 July 1930.
201 Big Stick Minutes, 2 August 1930; 4 October 1930.
202 Pinto Creek Minutes, 2 December 1933.
204 Swift Current Minutes, 20 September 1930.
205 Pinto Creek Minutes, 2 August 1930.
206 SAB, R-266, “Copy of General Letter.”
207 “The way it was: highway work camps," The Western Producer, 10 February 1977.
208 Ibid.
209 Big Stick Minutes, 15 July 1935.
Swift Current Minutes, 1 June 1935.

Mankota Minutes, 14 July 1932.

Mankota Minutes, 4 August 1934, Pinto Creek 4 June 1932, Clinworth, 1 October 1934, Swift Current, 3 May 1930, and 4 April 1931.

Saskatchewan Archives Board, Department of Agriculture, R-370, f1, “Dominion-Provincial Agreements,” Road Work, 1937.


Ibid., p. 52.

Department of Highways, Annual Reports, 1931/32, p. 9.

4: Exodus

I wish to thank my father David for pointing out and exploring with me this idea of consolidation.


James Gray, Men against the Desert (Saskatoon: Western Producer Books), p. 194.

Powell, “Northern Settlement,” pp. 87, 89.

Ibid., p. 86.

Ibid., p. 91.

Saskatchewan Archives Board, Department of Agricultural Statistics, R-266, #10, 3, Re-establishment Assistance, “List of Settlers Moved by Department of Agriculture, 1930, 1931, 1932.”

Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1934, see “Agricultural Relief Services” in introduction to report, n.p.

SAB, R-266, Department of Agricultural Statistics, Re-establishment Assistance “Settlers Effects Shipments” Ledger.


Saskatchewan Archives Board, Department of Municipal Affairs, MA.3, f8, Radio Address Given by Mr. Matte on the Work of the NSRB, 31 January and 14 February 1939, pp. 2–3.

Ibid., p. 3.


Gray, Men against the Desert, p. 196.


Ibid.

R-261, 22.13.2 Agricultural Reestablishment – Circulars etc., 1934–1936, Auld to RM Secretaries, 6 April 1935.

Ibid., underlined in original.

Ibid., Memo, signed by F.H. Auld, 15 October 1934.

Ibid., Auld to RM’s, 1934, undated.

Clinworth, Minutes of RM Meetings, 1 May 1933.
Notes

28 Big Stick, Minutes of RM Meetings, 6 August 1937.
29 Mankota, Minutes of RM Meetings, 2 September 1933.
30 Pinto Creek, Minutes of RM Meetings, 6 October 1934.
31 SAB, MA.3, f25, “Ottawa Correspondence re: relief settlement, 1936.”
32 Swift Current, Minutes of RM Meetings, 1 December 1934.
34 Ibid., vol. 3, p. 2441.
38 Ibid., p. 120.
39 Mankota Minutes, 4 September 1937.
44 Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-266, I.1, “Relief Files a”; see RM #243.
45 Ibid.; see RM #244.
46 Ibid.; see RM #1.
47 Gray, Men against the Desert, p. 31.
49 Ibid., “Report on Conditions in the Rural Municipality of Wood River.”
50 Saskatchewan, Department of Public Health, Annual Reports, pp. 220–21.
51 Saskatchewan Archives Board, Department of Agriculture, R-261, f22.15, Drought General, L. Wilson to F.H. Auld, 6 July, 1931.
53 Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, year ending 1936, pp. 96, 102.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid., p. 196.
59 SAB R-266, III Subject Files, f10 Re-establishment Assistance, “List of Settlers Assisted by the Land Utilization Board to Move to Points in Saskatchewan Not Classified as Northern.”
60 Ibid., “List of Settlers Assisted by the Land Utilization Board to Move to Northern Areas.”
61 Ibid., “List of Settlers Assisted by the Land Utilization Board Moved to Points Outside Saskatchewan.”
5: The Wreck of ’37

1 E.W. Stapleford, "Report on Rural Relief Due to Drought Conditions and Crop Failures in Western Canada," Canada, Department of Agriculture, 1938, p. 37.

2 Report of the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations – Saskatchewan, 1937, hereafter called the Rowell-Sirois Report, p. 38. This figure does not include the money that RMs spent for relief aid. See also, Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report 1943, pp. 159–62.

3 Stapleford, "Report on Rural Relief," p. 27.

4 Mankota: The First Fifty Years (Mankota, SK: Mankota Book Committee, 1980), p. 3.

5 Saskatchewan Archives Board, Department of Agriculture, R-266, I-1, "Relief files, a"; see the respective RM number.

6 "Optimism and Rain," Swift Current Sun, 6 April 1937, p. 4

7 "No Abandonment," Medicine Hat News, 29 June 1937, p. 3. This lake has been variously called Johnston Lake and Johnstone Lake.


9 Saskatchewan Archives Board, Department of Agriculture, R-261, f22.15, "Drought General," F.H. Auld to J.P. Robinson, 4 May 1937.

10 Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, "A Drouth Conference," 3 May 1937, p. 11.


12 Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, A Drouth Conference, p. 11.

13 Ibid.


51 I wish to thank Professor Martha Smith-Norris of the University of Saskatchewan for including this little tidbit in one of her lectures on the settlement of the American west.


53 Swift Current Sun, 21 September 1937, p. 4.


55 Ibid., p. 2.

56 Medicine Hat News, 9 August 1937, p. 1. The “triple-tipped lance” to which the honourable member referred was the creation of pasture land, improved fallow, and dugouts.


60 Ibid., p. 103.


62 Ibid., p. 112.

63 Broadfoot, *Ten Lost Years*, p. 37.

64 Gray, *Men against the Desert*, pp. 15, 33, 188.

65 Pinto Creek, *Minutes of RM Meetings*, 1 June 1935.

66 Ibid., 6 July 1929.

67 Gray, *Men against the Desert*, p. 188.

68 Ibid., p. 79.


70 Balkwill, *The P.F.R.A and the Community Pasture Program*, p. 50, see note 42.

71 When the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) was developing a weed control program, it was observed that Alberta requires weed control while Saskatchewan does not. The question was asked of long-serving and highly respected SARM executive director Mr. Ken Engel how to make weed control effective if there was no requirement for it. Understanding the nature of the organization’s membership, Mr. Engel replied that it was a problem to work around – weed control was not mandatory for Saskatchewan rural municipalities and any requests to make it so would certainly not come from SARM.


73 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, year ending 1939, p. 5.


75 Ibid., p. 5.

76 Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, year ending 1940, 84–85.


80 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture *Annual Report*, 1943, p. 162.

CONCLUSION: Oblivion (redux)

2 Ibid., p. 274.
3 Ibid., p. 275.
4 See Rowell-Sirois Report, Schedule A, Statement No. 12, p. 421.
5 See ibid. Liabilities column.
7 Ibid., p. 157.
10 Ibid., p. 60.
11 Jones, Empire of Dust, pp. 122–23.
12 Stapleford, “Relief,” p. 87.
13 Ibid., p. 86.
14 Ibid., p. 86.
15 Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, “Moral Standards Collapse Under Depression Strain,” 7 July 1937, p. 5
17 Ibid., p. 87.
18 Fred Wilkes, They Rose from the Dust (Saskatoon: Modern Press, 1958), p. 186.
20 Ibid.
22 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1940, p. 107; 1945, p. 187. The RM of Big Stick had signed over 50,000 acres to the LUB; Shamrock signed over title to 22,000 acres; the largest parcel of land was signed over by the RM of Lomond located adjacent to the RM of Hart Butte: Councilmen let go of 228 quarter sections of land, or 36,480 acres. See ibid., 1940, p. 108.
23 Ibid., 1945, p. 183.
24 John Archer, Saskatchewan (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1979), 240.
25 This information was provided by Dr. Sauchyn at a meeting concerning agricultural adaptation to drought on the south plains, Saskatoon, 9 February 2010.
28 Ibid.
30 Ibid., p. 191.
31 See A Dry Oasis: Institutional Adaptation to Climate on the Canadian Plains, ed. Gregory Marchildon (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2009), p. 32.
34 Ibid., p. 459.

Treasured Memories (Burstaff History Book Committee, 1983), p. 21.


Ibid.


Ibid., p. 3.


SAB R-370, f1, Dominion Provincial Agreements.


Ibid., p. 300.

Ibid., p. 287.

Stegner, Wolf Willow, pp. 294, 305.

Aneroid: The Rising Barometer, p. 5.

Ibid.


Ibid., p. 19.


Prairie Crucible, p. 225.

Gray, Men against the Desert, p. 9.


Captured Memories, p. v.

Interview with Mr. Ralph Mutter, September 1, 2010